

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method to control access to content via a player system accessible by a plurality of users, the method comprising:

providing a default profile including at least one filtering criterion, the filtering criterion describing at least one of a characteristic of content permitted for all of the plurality of users and a characteristic of content prohibited for all of the plurality of users;

comparing metadata associated with a selected content and the filtering criterion of the default profile, the metadata including information related to the selected content; and

permitting or denying access to the content based on the comparison.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the access to the selected content is permitted if the comparison indicates that the selected content meets the filtering criterion of the default profile.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the content includes at least one of audio and video data.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the information of the metadata includes at least one of an MPAA rating, a content advisory, a name of an actor associated with the selected content, a name of a director of the selected content, a genre and a synopsis.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein the filtering criterion includes at least one of identification of acceptable ratings, identification of acceptable content advisories, identification of prohibited synopsis information, identification of prohibited directors, identification of prohibited actors, and identification of prohibited genres.

6. The method according to claim 1, wherein the metadata is coded in XML.
7. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:
providing the selected content on a removable medium.
8. The method according to claim 1, wherein the medium includes at least one of a CD, DVD, magnetic tape, and flash memory.
9. The method according to claim 1, wherein the metadata is associated with the selected content using a URL in connection with the selected content, and wherein the method further comprises:
obtaining the metadata using the URL.
10. The method according to claim 1, wherein a pointer to the metadata is encoded in a Vertical Blanking Interval of a signal of the selected content, and the method further comprising:
obtaining the metadata using the pointer.
11. The method according to claim 10, wherein the pointer is a URL.
12. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:
providing a user profile associated with a particular one of the plurality of the users, the user profile including at least one filtering criterion describing at least one of a characteristic of content permitted to be accessed by the particular one of the users and a characteristic of content prohibited from being accessed by the particular one of the users;
comparing the filtering criterion of the user profile and the metadata; and

permitting access to the selected content if the content meets the filtering criterion.

13. The method according to claim 12, further comprising:

reverting back to the filtering criterion of the default profile in connection with accessing subsequent content.

14. The method according to claim 12, further comprising:

requiring the user to provide user information if the selected content does not meet the filtering criterion of the default profile.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the user information includes a username and a password, the user profile being associated with the username.

16. The method according to claim 1, wherein the comparing step includes comparing the metadata and the filtering criterion of the default profile prior without requiring a user to provide user information.

17. A content player accessible to a plurality of users, comprising:

a memory device storing a default profile, the default profile including at least one filtering criterion, the filtering criterion of the default profile describing at least one of a characteristic of content permitted for all of the plurality of users and a characteristic of content prohibited for all of the plurality of users;

a processor configured to compare metadata associated with selected content and the filtering criterion of the default profile, the processor configured to permit or deny rendering of the selected content based on the comparison.

18. The content player according to claim 17, wherein the selected content is provided on a removable media.

19. The content player according to claim 17, wherein a pointer to the metadata is associated with the selected content, and wherein the processor is configured to obtain the metadata for the comparison using the pointer.

20. The content player according to claim 19, wherein the pointer is a URL.

21. The content player according to claim 17, wherein the processor is provided in a settop box, and wherein the processor controls rendering of the content on a television.

22. The content player according to claim 21, wherein the processor is configured to obtain a pointer to the metadata, the pointer being encoded in a vertical blanking interval of a signal of the selected content; and wherein the processor obtains the metadata for the comparison using the pointer.

23. The content player according to claim 22, wherein the pointer is a URL.

24. The content player according to claim 17, wherein the processor is configured to manage the default profile and a plurality of user profiles, each of the user profiles being associated with a respective one of the users.

25. The content player according to claim 17, wherein the filtering criterion includes at least one of identification of acceptable ratings, identification of acceptable content advisories, identification of prohibited synopsis information, identification of prohibited directors, identification of prohibited actors, and identification of prohibited genres.

26. The content player according to claim 17, wherein the metadata is coded in XML.

27. A method to control access to content via a player system, the method comprising:

- selecting content, the selected content having metadata linked thereto via a pointer;
- obtaining the metadata using the pointer;
- comparing the metadata and at least one filtering criterion, the filtering criterion describing a characteristic of at least one of permitted content or prohibited content;
- permitting or denying access to the selected content based on the comparison.

28. The method according to claim 27, wherein the pointer is embedded in a Vertical Blanking Interval (VBI) of a signal of the selected content, and wherein the method further comprises:

- extracting the pointer from the VBI.

29. The method according to claim 27, wherein the pointer is a URL, and the step of obtaining the metadata of the selected content includes obtaining the metadata over the Internet using the URL.

30. A content player, comprising:

- a memory device storing at least one filtering criterion, the filtering criterion describing a characteristic of at least one of permitted content and prohibited content;
- and

- a processor configured to obtain a pointer to metadata associated with selected content, obtain the metadata using the pointer, compare the metadata to the filtering criterion, and to permit or deny rendering of the selected content based on the comparison.

31. The content player according to claim 30, wherein the processor is configured to extract the pointer from a vertical blanking interval (VBI) of a signal of the selected content.

32. The content player according to claim 30, wherein the pointer is a URL, and the processor is further configured to obtain the metadata over the Internet using the URL.

33. A method to control access to content stored on a memory device, comprising:

- selecting the content stored on the memory device;
- reading metadata associated with the content;
- comparing the metadata to at least one stored filtering criterion, the filtering criterion describing a characteristic of at least one of permitted and prohibited content; and
- permitting or denying rendering of the content based on the comparison.

34. The method according to claim 33, wherein the metadata includes ratings information.

35. A content player, comprising:

- a memory device storing at least one filtering criterion, the filtering criterion describing a characteristic of at least one of permitted content and prohibited content;
- and

- a processor configured to compare at least one stored filtering criterion with metadata associated with selected content, and to permit or deny rendering of the selected content based on the comparison.